

I am excited to report that the full House of Representatives approved my bill (H.R. 3433) to amend the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) by voice vote and without opposition this week. This bill is a commonsense solution to improve international wetlands conservation efforts and protects migratory birds that travel to the U.S. Specifically, H.R. 3433 would allow up to 50 percent of the non-federal share of projects in Canada to be paid for by Canadian conservation supporters.

Since 1989, current law has required that each federal dollar spent on a conservation project be matched by non-federal money. However, due to the importance of the breeding waterfowl habitat in Canada, a decision was made not to require matching funds from Canadian sources. Therefore, projects in Canada have been matched by conservation dollars from the United States.

The current authorization of funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act does not expire until September 30, 2012. We simply cannot wait to make this change because our contribution to the fund is becoming increasingly unequal, and will continue to grow until the authorization expires.

Each year, Congress appropriates money to be spent on projects to purchase, enhance, protect and restore wetlands in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Over the past 20 years this program has funded over 1,600 projects to conserve more than 20 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands across North America.

According to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the North American Wetlands Council has approved conservation projects in Canada worth nearly \$70 million during its current five-year funding cycle which began in 2007. Under law, this means that \$70 million in private matching funds must be provided. My bill allows our Canadian conservation partners to contribute funds for important wetland projects north of the border.

Additionally, this legislation has been vetted and endorsed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service, and members of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council which includes: Ducks Unlimited, the National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy. These endorsements of H.R. 3433 have been vital to the bill's success in Congress thus far.

I'm pleased that the House passed this commonsense legislation, and given the overwhelming interest in protecting wildlife habitats, we shouldn't waste another moment or dime in failure to act on this legislation now that it has been sent to the Senate for approval. I look forward to testifying before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Water and Wildlife Subcommittee on the importance of this legislation on November 2nd and will continue to keep you up to date as we move through the process.

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.*